



# Oneida County Health Department

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September 8, 2006

## For Immediate Release

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### **BLUE-GREEN ALGAE CAN BE A HEALTH HAZARD**

Rhinelander, WI – Health officials are reminding people to watch out for blue-green algae blooms in Oneida County waterways this summer, and to avoid swimming in water where a visible scum or mat of blue-green algae is present.

“When blue-green algae are present in high numbers, some bathers who swim in affected waters may experience eye, ear, or skin irritation, or gastrointestinal problems like vomiting and diarrhea,” said Ann Ovsak, Public Health Nurse, Oneida County Health Department.

Blue-green algae, technically known as cyanobacteria, are found naturally in Wisconsin lakes and ponds at low levels. As the weather gets warmer, conditions become more favorable for the cyanobacteria to bloom, or increase greatly in number. Blooms may be visible as thick mats on the surface of the water, can be bluish green to red in color, and often have a bad odor.

Some species of blue-green algae found naturally in our waterways produce toxins that may cause muscle cramps, twitching, paralysis, nausea, vomiting, or liver failure, and even death in animals. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services typically receives several reports of dogs and livestock dying after drinking water containing blue-green algae every year.

To protect your family, pets and livestock, it is best to stay away from the suspect water. During a bloom, don’t swim, water-ski, and otherwise enter the water in the area of the bloom. Often it is enough to move livestock or recreational activities to the opposite side of the lake to avoid a harmful bloom. Be sure to pay attention to posted signs and advisories posted by health officials.

For more information, and some basic guidelines to help you avoid exposure to blue-green algal blooms, call the Oneida County Health Department at 715-369-6110 or visit the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services website at:  
<http://dhfs.wi.gov/eh/Water/>

*Oneida County Health Department will promote and protect the health of  
Oneida County by providing leadership, education and services.*